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French Polynesia

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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The Territory at a glance

Territory: French Polynesia is a Non-Self-Governing Territory under the Charter of the United Nations. It is administered by France.

Representative of administering Power: René Bidal, High Commissioner of the Republic (since 30 May 2016).

Geography: French Polynesia occupies a vast maritime zone in the south Pacific, covering an area comparable to that of Europe (2.5 million km²).

Land area: The 118 islands that comprise French Polynesia, grouped in five archipelagos, represent a land area of about 3,600 km².

Exclusive economic zone: 4,767,242 km².

Population: 271,800 (2014, Statistical Bureau of French Polynesia).

Life expectancy at birth: women: 78.0 years; men: 73.8 years (2014).

Ethnic composition: Polynesian (65 per cent); "Demis" (mixed race) (16 per cent); persons of Chinese origin (5 per cent); Popâa (white) (12 per cent).

Language: French; Tahitian; Marquesan; Tuamotuan; Mangareva; Austral island languages: Ra'ivavae, Rapa and Rurutu; English; Hakka Chinese; Cantonese; and Vietnamese.

Capital: Papeete.

Head of territorial Government: Édouard Fritch (since September 2014).

Main political parties: The political groupings in Congress are: Rassemblement pour une majorité autonomiste (Rally for a pro-autonomy majority), Tahoera'a Huiraatira, Tapura Huiraatira, Union for Democracy, A Ti'a Porinetia.

Elections: Municipal, European and senatorial elections, as well as legislative by-elections, were held in 2014. Senatorial by-elections were held in May 2015.

Parliament: The Assembly of French Polynesia consists of 57 representatives elected by universal suffrage.

Gross domestic product per capita: US$ 20,098 (2014).

Unemployment rate: 21.8 per cent (2013).

Economy: Fishing and copra farming are the two traditional activities. In addition to trade, the Territory's economy relies on handicrafts, industry, construction, public works and, more recently tourism, and aquaculture, particularly pearl farming (black pearl cultivation), which has become the leading export in value terms.

Monetary unit: Pacific franc, or CFP franc.

Brief history: The Polynesian people became established as a result of successive waves of migration from A.D. 300 to the end of the fourteenth century. Europeans first reached French Polynesia in 1521 (Magellan) and started to settle after the arrival of Captain Wallis in 1767. Beginning in the early nineteenth century, the Pomare dynasty extended its influence over both Tahiti and the Tuamotu and Leeward Islands. It signed a protectorate treaty with France in 1842; then, in 1880, King Pomare V granted France sovereignty over the islands that were dependencies of the Tahitian crown, thereby giving rise to the French Establishments in Oceania. The latter became an overseas collectivity with the creation of the French Union in 1946 and has been referred to as French Polynesia since 1957. The Polynesians reaffirmed their wish to remain a territory of France in a referendum held in 1958 (source: Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer).

I. Constitutional, political and legal issues

1. According to the French Government portal set up for collectivities, which is maintained by the General Directorate of Public Finances and the General Directorate of Local Collectivities, the Constitution of 27 October 1946 classified Polynesia as an overseas territory (territoire d'outre-mer), and that status was maintained by the 1958 Constitution. The constitutional review of 28 March 2003 amended article 74 of the Constitution in relation to overseas territories and replaced the term "overseas territory" (territoire d'outre-mer) with the term "overseas collectivity" (collectivité d'outre-mer). Legislators were tasked with defining the organizational and operational rules of a collectivity's institutions and the electoral arrangements of its deliberative assembly. The status of each overseas collectivity is adopted after consultation by its deliberative assembly. French Polynesia's status was established by Act No. 2004-192 of 27 February 2004, which specified an organization that was different from that under common law and close to an assembly-based parliamentary system. The President of French Polynesia has a representative function, directing the actions of government and administration, and promulgating local "country laws" (*lois du pays*). The French Polynesian Government, comprising between 7 and 10 ministers, is responsible for conducting the collectivity's policy. The collectivity's deliberative body is the Assembly of French Polynesia, which is elected by direct universal suffrage every five years.

2. Also according to the French Government portal for collectivities, despite its special institutional organization, French Polynesia does not have political autonomy; however, it does enjoy administrative autonomy, and is subject to specific legislation. Under the principle of legislative and regulatory specificity, the organic legislative body of each overseas collectivity is tasked with establishing the conditions for applying relevant laws and regulations. Metropolitan law is therefore applicable only when explicitly indicated. Moreover, French Polynesia's deliberative assembly has recourse to certain categories of act, in accordance with its competencies in the legal domain, which are known as "country laws" (*lois du pays*). These acts have a broad scope under Polynesia's statutory jurisdiction and can be appealed only to the French Council of State (Conseil d'Etat) and not to the Polynesian Administrative Tribunal (Tribunal administratif). This administrative autonomy entails the sharing of jurisdiction by the French State and French Polynesia. The State has jurisdiction in the areas of sovereignty referred to in article 14 of the Organization Act of 2004 and in 37 other areas, such as intercommunity cooperation, police and civil aviation security, which the collectivity has chosen to attribute to the State. For its part, in addition to ordinary jurisdiction, French Polynesia may, subject to monitoring by the State, exercise its jurisdiction in guaranteeing the rights granted throughout the national territory regarding public freedoms (art. 14, para. 11, of Act No. 2004-192 of 27 February 2004).

3. According to the 2014 annual report on French Polynesia published by the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer in 2016, the 2004 reform resulted in a long period of political instability, which the adoption of two laws (Organization Act No. 2007-223, abolishing the electoral rule whereby additional seats were attributed to the party having won the majority of votes; and Organization Act No. 2007-1720 on introducing motions of no-confidence) failed to remedy; it should be noted that 11 governments succeeded one another from 2004 to 2013. In 2011, Organization Act

No. 2011-918 on the functioning of institutions was adopted to restore stability. This law modified the electoral process by re-establishing the electoral rule previously abolished and by creating a single electoral constituency; it also set a limit on the number of ministers and the possibility of overthrowing the government. This law has been implemented since the territorial elections held in May 2013.

4. According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, the institutions of French Polynesia consist of the President, the Government, the Assembly of French Polynesia and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council. The role and powers of these institutions are defined by organic law.

5. The President is elected by the Assembly of French Polynesia by secret ballot for a five-year term. He forms the Government by appointing the Vice-President and ministers, whom he can dismiss; and he directs the action of the ministers. The President promulgates country laws and signs the acts adopted by the Council of Ministers. He is the originator of the budget and directs territorial administration. His mandate is compatible with that of a deputy, senator and mayor, and it can be terminated by a vote of no confidence by the Assembly, or in the event of the latter's dissolution. On 12 September 2014, the Assembly of French Polynesia elected Mr. Édouard Fritch as President of the Territory.

6. The Government serves as French Polynesia's executive power and conducts its policy. It meets every week through the Council of Ministers, which has collective and collegiate responsibility for affairs within its jurisdiction. The Government establishes which draft decisions are to be submitted to the Assembly and which enabling measures are needed to implement them. It also has wide-ranging regulatory power. It is consulted on a mandatory basis in areas where the State has jurisdiction, either by the Minister for Overseas Territories or by the High Commissioner, depending on the case in question.

7. The Assembly of French Polynesia, consisting of 57 members elected by direct universal suffrage for five-year terms, debates all issues within the collectivity's jurisdiction, other than those devolved to the Council of Ministers or to the President of the Government. The Assembly adopts country laws, over which the Council of State exercises jurisdictional control, and the decisions submitted by the Government. It votes on French Polynesia's budget and accounts and oversees actions taken by the Government. The Government may be overthrown by a motion of no confidence; the Assembly can be dissolved by a decree issued by the President of the Republic, at the request of local government.

8. The Economic, Social and Cultural Council, a consultative body, consists of representatives from professional groupings, labour unions, organizations and associations involved in the economic, social and cultural life of the collectivity. The Council issues opinions with corresponding recommendations on issues referred to it by the Government and the Assembly. Its advice must be sought on economic, social and cultural projects, and it must be consulted on legislative proposals prepared by the Government or the Assembly of French Polynesia. It may also undertake studies on issues within its jurisdiction, on its own initiative, subject to a two-thirds majority vote of its members. The Council consists of 51 members who are appointed by their peers for a four-year term and are distributed among three colleges (representatives of wage earners; representatives of entrepreneurs and

self-employed workers; and representatives of sociocultural sectors). Its president is elected for two years.

9. According to the 2016 Guide to State services and institutions in French Polynesia, the High Commissioner of the Republic represents the central Government and each of the ministers. He works closely with the President and the Government of French Polynesia, which are in contact with all national stakeholders, to serve the public interest. The safety and security of its citizens is the High Commissioner's main priority. He manages the High Commission's administrative and technical services, primarily for communities and individual beneficiaries. At the request of French Polynesia, he mobilizes the expertise necessary to create high-impact projects, with a view to supporting the economy. The High Commissioner also ensures the coherence of all services provided by the French State. He is the intermediary between the central administrations and the ministers in Paris. Alongside the judicial authority, administrative judge and auditor, he is responsible for ensuring observance of the law and the legal soundness of the acts adopted by the collectivities. As a representative of the Government, the High Commissioner is responsible for guiding the activities of the French State at sea. The geographical jurisdiction of the High Commissioner covers the maritime zone of French Polynesia, including the waters under French sovereignty and jurisdiction surrounding Clipperton Island, that is, within the limits of the exclusive economic zone.

10. In 2014, the French Council of State invalidated country law No. 2013-17, which in 2013 had re-established the High Council of French Polynesia, a consultative body tasked with advising the President of the Territory and the Government in the drafting of country laws, regulatory acts and decisions. In 2011, the High Council had been eliminated in application of the recommendations of the assistance mission to French Polynesia aimed at reducing operational costs.

11. The French President visited French Polynesia on 22 February 2016 alongside the Minister for Overseas Territories. In a speech before the elected representatives of French Polynesia, he set out the various actions taken to support the territory, including the unblocking of the adjustment subsidy in 2012, a contribution to the funding of the solidarity regime, financial support in the areas of health and social housing, and a provision for tax relief until 2015. The President also solemnly recognized the contribution of French Polynesia to the nuclear deterrent of France and that the nuclear tests carried out in French Polynesia between 1966 and 1996 had had an environmental impact, led to health consequences and caused social upheaval once the tests had come to an end. He announced that the procedure for addressing requests for compensation from test victims would be reviewed; that an archiving, information and documentation institute would be established; that the French State would support oncology services at Tahiti hospital; that the comprehensive autonomy subsidy would be ring-fenced and restored to over 90 million euros; and that the environmental consequences of the tests would be addressed by dismantling the facilities, cleaning up the Hao atoll and closely monitoring the atolls of Mururoa and Fangataufa.

12. When he met with the Minister for Overseas Territories in Paris on 6 October 2016, the President of French Polynesia raised such issues as the Papeete agreements and the overhaul of the Territory's autonomous status. He recalled that the Papeete agreements would enshrine the commitments that he had made during

his visit to the Territory in February 2016, particularly with regard to recognition of the consequences of nuclear testing and State support for economic development.

II. Economic conditions

A. General

13. According to the French Ministry for Overseas Territories, fishing and copra production are the two traditional activities in the French Polynesian archipelagos, which extend over vast stretches of ocean. In addition to trade, the Territory's economy relies on handicrafts, industry, construction, public works and, more recently, tourism, as well as aquaculture, particularly pearl farming (black pearl cultivation), which has become the leading export in value terms.

14. According to a document published by the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer in June 2016, the service sector plays an important role in the French Polynesian economy, generating 85 per cent of total value added in 2012. At the end of 2015, more than 8 out of every 10 wage workers were employed in the service sector. Business services are the main branch of the economy, accounting for 38 per cent of wealth produced. In the service sector, public administration generates 37 per cent of the Territory's wealth. The primary sector, which comprises agriculture, pearl farming and fisheries, accounts for only 3 per cent of the French Polynesian economy. Between 2007 and 2013, French Polynesia saw a sharp economic slowdown caused by the global economic crisis and local political instability. In 2014, for the first time since 2008, the growth of gross domestic product was positive. In 2015, there was a 1.1 per cent growth in gross domestic product, boosted by investment and strong household consumption. Two new project agreements for 2015-2020 were approved by the Assembly of French Polynesia on 3 March 2015: the first was related to the financing of projects under the jurisdiction of the Territory and the second was for the financing of community projects.

15. On 1 December 2016, the Assembly of French Polynesia adopted an initial budget of 155.7 billion CFP francs for 2017 (10 per cent higher than the initial budget for 2016).

B. Agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture and pearl farming

16. According to the 2016 report of the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer mentioned in paragraph 3 above, French Polynesian agriculture is based on small-scale family farms that practise polyculture. Its development is hindered by farmers' lack of training and a shortage of land suitable for crop growing, owing to such factors as challenging terrain in the higher islands, poor-quality soil on the atolls and issues related to a lack of land division. The Society Islands archipelago is the country's leading agricultural region, accounting for 60 per cent of all farms in French Polynesia. The other archipelagos practise more specialized agriculture. The Austral Islands specialize in truck farming. The monoculture of copra is focused on Tuamotu-Gambier. The Marquise islands have a mix of copra and fruit farming and extensive animal husbandry. The utilized agricultural area shrank by 45 per cent between 1995 and 2012, which was when the last general agricultural census was taken. At the same

time, the volume of commercial agricultural production was broadly maintained and its value rose by 23 per cent, indicating an increase in productivity.

17. Thanks to its exclusive economic zone, French Polynesia has major fishery potential. Nonetheless, fishing endured a major crisis in the early 2000s owing to the depletion of stocks and the El Niño climatic pattern. Catch volume and value both declined. According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, profits have been gradually picking up since 2005, and fishing sector exports increased by 19 per cent in volume terms and 28 per cent by value in 2015, making 2015 the best year of the decade. Aquaculture in French Polynesia is practised by five farms specializing in shrimp culture, fish farming, and coral aquaculture. The Fisheries Service estimates annual sales at around 110 million CFP francs.

18. The Tahitian pearl, which has become a flagship industry of the French Polynesian economy, has also undergone a major crisis since the beginning of the 2000s, as a result of falling world prices and challenges in formalizing the industry. According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, pearl farming accounted for 54 per cent of the Territory's export revenues from goods in 2015, as compared with 69 per cent in 2014 and 90 per cent 20 years ago.

C. Industry

19. According to the annual report of the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer published in 2016, the development of the industrial sector in French Polynesia is facing structural constraints including a small domestic market, which restricts economies of scale, and heavy dependence on raw materials and energy. Local industry development benefits from customs protection in the form of the local development import tax. The French Polynesian industrial sector is made up of primarily small units: 85 per cent of the 2,457 industrial businesses listed in the 2015 territorial business directory of the Statistical Bureau of French Polynesia employed a maximum of two wage workers; and a total of 103 businesses employed a maximum of 10.

D. Transport and communications

20. According to the French Ministry for Overseas Territories, the port of Papeete is French Polynesia's maritime link to the outside world. It is managed by a public enterprise, the autonomous Port of Papeete. Since its first master plan in 1987, it has expanded its infrastructure to meet the requirements of economic growth. According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, various frameworks have made it possible to adapt the infrastructure to the Territory's economic development, in particular through the construction of a new ferry terminal, which opened in 2012. The 2009-2019 plan seeks to improve security, in line with international regulations, and to address the overcrowding in the area currently surrounding the port. A new marina opened in the centre of Papeete at the end of April 2015.

21. French Polynesia has air connections to all continents: Asia (Japan); Oceania (Cook Islands, New Caledonia and New Zealand); North America (United States of America); South America (Chile); and Europe. It has one international airport, in

Tahiti (Faa'a), owned by the State. In 2010, operation of the airport was handed over to a semi-public company, Aéroport de Tahiti, whose capital is shared between French Polynesia, the French Development Agency (Agence Française du Développement), and Egis, a subsidiary of Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations. The archipelagos are serviced primarily by the private sector and by the administrative fleet (limited to public services, such as transporting children to school from the outlying islands). According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, air travel had a dynamic 2015. Air travel increased for the second consecutive year (by 1.3 per cent for international traffic and 2.7 per cent for domestic traffic), whereas it had declined in the period 2008-2013.

E. Tourism

22. According to the 2016 report of the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, the tourism industry is the leading source of goods and services exported from the Territory. The tourism industry represents 2,820 businesses (11 per cent of total businesses in 2015), which generate 15 per cent of French Polynesia's turnover and employ 17 per cent of wage workers (10,250 people).

23. According to the Statistical Bureau of French Polynesia, the main countries of origin of tourists in French Polynesia are the United States of America (35 per cent of the total in 2015), France (19 per cent) Europe other than France (15 per cent) and Japan (6 per cent). Tourism from China, although still low at 3 per cent of the total, has increased tenfold since 2009, from 500 tourists to 5,500 in 2015.

24. According to the 2016 annual report of the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, a tourism revival was evident in 2015, when 183,800 tourists visited the Territory, a 1.8 per cent increase compared with 2014, although cruise holidays saw a 6.5 per cent decline. Hospitality turnover increased by 9.4 per cent. Hospitality and the restaurant sector are the most important components of the tourism industry, accounting for 69 per cent of companies (mostly restaurants) and 61 per cent of tourism wage earners in 2015. As at late 2015, hospitality and the restaurant sector generated 43 per cent of the turnover of the French Polynesian tourism industry and accounted for 1,930 companies, or 8 per cent of the business base in the Territory.

F. Environment

25. According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, the Government has set a 50 per cent target for the proportion of renewables in total energy use by 2020, as part of its sustainable development strategy. In 2015, 65 per cent of French Polynesian energy production came from fossil fuels (hydrocarbons). The remainder came from hydroelectric power and, to a much lesser extent, from solar energy (photovoltaic). Hydroelectric power remained the main alternative to thermal energy, accounting for 33 per cent of electricity generated in 2015. In November 2015, the Government of the Territory set out an energy transition plan for the period 2015-2030. The plan focuses on the use of renewable energy to replace fossil fuels, and on reducing energy consumption by replacing the most energy-intensive equipment. It also seeks to develop price transparency and competition in the electricity sector. There are two thermal power facilities on the island of Tahiti

(Vairaatoa and Punaruu) and five hydroelectric plants (Papenoo, Faatautia, Vaihiria, Titaaviri and Vaite). On the other islands, thermal power is most prevalent. Organization Act No. 2004-192 on the autonomous status of French Polynesia increased the responsibility of the communities for drinking water supply and wastewater treatment. In a specific section on communities, the new 2015-2020 project agreement allocates 12 billion CFP francs to projects for drinking water supply, wastewater treatment and waste management. The degradation of water resources contributes significantly to lagoon and river pollution and has negative consequences on people's health. Lack of waste treatment remains one of the major causes of lagoon and river pollution, with repercussions for the image of French Polynesia as a tourist destination. Given the challenges faced by the communities in meeting their obligations, the General Code of Local Collectivities was amended in March 2015 in order to extend the time frame for providing sanitation, safe drinking water and waste treatment services. Before, the communities were supposed to supply safe drinking water by 2015 and provide wastewater treatment services by 2020 at the latest; now, they have until 2024 to do so. This extension, however, is conditional on the establishment of a forward equipment procurement and upgrading plan by the end of 2019 at the latest. An estimated 147,000 tons of sewage were produced in 2013, as compared to 130,000 tons in 2006 (75 per cent in Tahiti); this major challenge is further accentuated by the scattered geography of the islands and large distances between them. Responsibility for waste management rests with the communities, which collect and treat domestic solid waste.

III. Social conditions

A. General

26. French Polynesia's single programming document for the tenth European Development Fund in 2013, referring to a study conducted by the French Development Agency, stresses that an estimated 19.7 per cent of households have incomes below the relative poverty line. According to the study, major income gaps remain; the relative poverty of households is expected to deteriorate further; and income instability mainly affects low-income families and those not benefiting from regular wages. Lastly, given the inadequate targeting of social transfers and the lack of direct progressive taxation of revenue, public policy is of particular importance for reducing inequalities and consequently poverty.

27. The agreement formalizing the assistance to be provided by the French State to the territorial solidarity regime of French Polynesia was signed on 16 April 2015. France made three commitments: to provide an annual subsidy of 12 million euros over three years from 2015 until 2017; to write off the regime's debt of 6 million euros in respect of the Paris public hospital system; and to cancel the 30 per cent surcharge applied to care for French Polynesian patients who are hospitalized in a Paris public hospital. Meanwhile, French Polynesia undertook to introduce the reforms needed to ensure the long-term sustainability and stability of its social protection system, to reform its health-care system and to implement a new health strategy for 2015-2019.

B. Employment

28. According to the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, the labour market is dominated by the tertiary sector, which accounts for 80 per cent of direct wage-paying jobs declared to the Social Security Fund (Caisse de prévoyance sociale). According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, employment in French Polynesia is characterized by the predominance of the tertiary sector, which accounts for more than 8 out of 10 of all wage workers. Services employ over two thirds of all wage workers, almost 6 out of 10 of whom work in the business sector. Construction employs 7 per cent of workers and manufacturing 8 per cent. At the end of 2015, the primary sector, namely agriculture and relevant marine trades, accounted for 3 per cent of wage workers, and the proportion of people employed by the State remained stable at 9,963. The labour market was dominated by wage employment and is heavily influenced by the demographic situation, characterized by over one third of the population under 20 years of age, a declining fertility rate and ever-increasing life expectancy, which in turn speeds up population ageing. Forecasts made by the Statistical Bureau of French Polynesia suggest that individuals 60 years of age and older will make up 17 per cent of the population in 2027, compared to 9 per cent in 2007.

29. According to data published by the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer in November 2016, wage employment, which contracted sharply during the crisis (by an average of 2.2 per cent per year between 2008 and 2013), began to stabilize in 2014 as the economy gradually recovered. In 2015, the number of job seekers continued to grow (+8.2 per cent, as compared to +1.8 per cent in 2014), driven by the introduction of employment access contracts (contrats d'accès à l'emploi) in 2014. However, according to a study entitled "Les Comptes économiques rapides de la Polynésie Française — 2015" ("Early economic accounts of French Polynesia — 2015"), the growth in employment (270 additional waged positions in 2015) is not enough to bring down unemployment. On average, 1,300 people enter the job market of French Polynesia each year. According to the study, the unemployment rate, which was 21.8 per cent (24,900 people) in the 2012 census, can be estimated at 24 per cent in 2015, other factors remaining equal.

C. Education

30. According to the Ministry for Overseas Territories, under article 6 of the Autonomy Act No. 96-312 of 12 April 1996, primary and secondary education is the Territory's responsibility, while post-baccalaureate and higher education is the responsibility of the State. French Polynesia has 236 primary schools (including pre-primary and special-needs schools) and 99 secondary schools. The school year is not identical to that of the metropolis, owing in particular to specific climate factors: the long vacations are shorter (roughly 50 days), and Christmas vacations are longer (about one month). Nonetheless, the State guarantees the national equivalency of the diplomas awarded, while French Polynesia has total jurisdiction in terms of educational activities. The town halls are responsible for enrolment, generally around May each year. French Polynesia offers a varied educational system, with schools specializing in diverse areas. The University of French Polynesia, a public scientific, cultural and vocational establishment, is located in Outamaoro, in the community of Punaauia. Established in 1987 and autonomous since 1999, this young university has been a major hub of higher education and research activities for over 20 years.

31. The General Directorate of Education and Teaching was established on 1 July 2014. It is responsible for all primary and secondary school education in the Territory.

32. According to the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, although virtually all young people now attend school, performance still lags behind that of metropolitan France, especially with regard to graduation rates. The baccalaureate diploma rate in French Polynesia is half that recorded in France; and the Territory is even further from its goal of a 70 per cent baccalaureate rate set by the 2011 Education Charter.

D. Health care

33. According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, French Polynesia has full authority over health issues. The French Government provides financial support, particularly through the project agreement. The 2015-2020 project agreement allocated 3.6 billion CFP francs to the health sector and, in particular, the planning and equipping of major public health hubs and the establishment of small medical units in remote archipelagos. According to a health survey conducted in French Polynesia in 2010, most archipelagos, with the exception of the Society Islands, rely on the primary health-care services provided by the Government through first-aid stations, infirmaries, clinics and medical centres, whereas primary health care in the Windward and Leeward Islands is provided mostly by private practitioners, including physicians, nurses, midwives and physical therapists. Four public hospitals provide local hospital care. Specialized health care is provided by public and, to a greater extent, private ambulatory medical services and specialist physicians, most of whom practise in Tahiti, Moorea and Raiatea. Those suffering from diseases that cannot be treated in French Polynesia are evacuated to New Zealand or metropolitan France. According to the Statistical Bureau of French Polynesia, in 2014, there were 192 physicians, 39 dental surgeons and 55 pharmacists in the Territory. Health care is covered by a health insurance company managed by the Social Security Fund. There are three regimes: wage workers; non-wage-workers subject to employee and employer contributions; and the solidarity regime for indigent persons not subject to contributions. While the geographical and demographic situation of French Polynesia is beneficial in some areas in that it allows for local health care targeted to small communities, it nevertheless presents challenges, specifically in providing a sufficiently broad range of community-based care to meet needs; ensuring an even distribution of services throughout the Territory; and preventing delays in reaching and evacuating patients in emergency situations. As a result, providing quality health care to the entire population comes at a very high cost, according to the 2010 health survey conducted in French Polynesia.

34. Also according to the 2016 report of the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, the main causes of mortality are linked to cancerous or cardiovascular pathologies. Among people aged under 65, half of all deaths are linked to road accidents, especially for young persons aged between 15 and 25, and to dietary habits (unbalanced diets and alcoholism). In particular, in French Polynesia, 70 per cent of the population is overweight (and 40 per cent suffers from obesity, as compared to 15 per cent in metropolitan France in 2012), with related medical complications.

35. The distance between islands in French Polynesia made it a pioneer in telemedicine: as early as 1991, electrocardiograms were being shared by hospital

emergency room doctors on different islands. With the arrival of the Internet in 2000, such exchanges expanded to include photographs of patients and radiological imaging. In 2005, when an emergency medical service was established, physicians set up a system for sharing still images. A pilot project involving the high-speed transmission of moving images between three outlying islands was recently launched.

36. On 6 July 2016, at the second meeting of the commission following up implementation of the Act of 5 January 2010 concerning the recognition and compensating of victims of nuclear tests, the Minister of Social Affairs, Health and Women's Rights of the French Government set out the progress made in the commission's work since its first meeting on 13 October 2015 (see A/AC.109/2016/7, paragraph 21). With regard to the goal of improving the current compensation scheme, the Minister said that, in the interests of transparency, the standards for assessing negligible risk and compensation had been made public. As the topic was highly technical, the staff of the Ministry and of the Committee for the Compensation of Nuclear Test Victims were working on a more concise and accessible version. The Minister also introduced a draft order that had been proposed by the French Government and promised by the French President during his visit to the Territory (see paragraph 11 above). According to the Minister, the order would fine-tune the concept of negligible risk by specifying two points. First, it would define the probability threshold beyond which risk could not be considered negligible, moving the threshold from 1 per cent to 0.3 per cent. Second, cases could not be dismissed based on a presumption of negligible risk in the absence of dosimetric data or of the necessary monitoring measures. Further to those points, and in the light of the current appreciation of negligible risk, victims who had not been able to secure compensation would be in a position to submit a new claim. Claimants would also be able to address the Committee by videoconference while their claim was being considered. That measure would facilitate the Committee's work in view of the costs associated with the distance between French Polynesia and metropolitan France. With regard to the goal of improving information regarding the compensation scheme, the Minister said that, as of September 2015, fewer than 1,000 compensation requests had been submitted since the introduction of the scheme. The causes included lack of confidence in the reformed scheme and lack of available information, particularly for those persons with least access to their rights. She hoped that health professionals in French Polynesia would be better informed and would be able to identify and monitor persons whose health condition could be connected with the nuclear tests.

37. On 18 November 2016, the High Commissioner submitted to the President of French Polynesia, for consultations, a draft order on the new procedure for handling compensation claims for nuclear test victims. The Government of French Polynesia had one month to give its opinion. The draft order would then be considered by the Council of State for publication, if possible, in early 2017.

IV. Relations with international organizations and partners

38. French Polynesia has been an associate member of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific since 1992. It is a member of the Pacific Community and the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, and a participating

territory in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and the Polynesian Leaders Group. The other regional agreements to which French Polynesia is a party include the Oceania Customs Organization and the Pacific Power Association.

39. On 10 September 2016, at the forty-seventh annual summit of the Pacific Islands Forum held in Pohnpei (Federated States of Micronesia), French Polynesia became a full member of the organization. According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, full membership will allow the Territory to bolster its regional integration and economic development, principally through facilitated access to financing, including for environment programmes and the sharing of experiences in such areas as education and health.

40. The second summit of Polynesian leaders on climate change was held in French Polynesia from 28 June to 1 July 2016. The purpose of the conference was to take stock of the actions taken since the signature of the Polynesia against Climate Threats declaration regarding climate change, and to conclude another, more specific agreement on the protection of the Pacific Ocean. The Oceans Declaration was signed in Papeete on 28 June 2016.

V. Consideration by the United Nations

A. Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

41. The Special Committee considered the question of French Polynesia at its 11th and 12th meetings on 24 and 30 June 2016, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/100. At the 11th meeting, the Special Committee having granted requests for hearings, statements were made by a representative of the Union pour la démocratie, Richard Ariihau Tuheiava; the third Deputy Mayor of Faa'a, Tahiti, Charles Brotherson Moetai; and a researcher at the Dependency Studies Project, Carlyle Corbin. The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela made a statement at the same meeting. Mr. Tuheiava said, among other things, that he regretted the failure of the administering Power to transmit the information required under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations. According to international law and numerous General Assembly resolutions, the people of French Polynesia enjoyed in particular permanent sovereignty over their natural resources, including the marine resources within its exclusive economic zone. The administering Power had recently announced plans to submit a claim for an extended continental shelf in French Polynesian waters, without consultation with the people or elected government of the Territory. A new accord on his Territory's political status being was drafted in Paris, again with no consultation. It sought to extend the French policy of assimilation so as to bring the Territory closer to integration with France without the consent of its people. Mr. Brotherson said that the question of the effects of the nuclear tests of the peoples of French Polynesia could not be left to the discretion of the administering Power. Mr. Corbin said that the extent of the autonomy of French Polynesia had been assessed using indicators that could identify the nature of the political status of relations between the territory and the administering Power. The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela said that his country was closely following the

decolonization process of French Polynesia. He urged the Committee to carry out a study of the exploitation of the natural resources of the Territory. He was concerned that, 17 years after the last test, the inhabitants of the French Polynesia continued to be affected by the consequences of the nuclear tests.

42. At its 12th meeting, on 30 June 2016, the Special Committee adopted, without a vote, a draft resolution submitted by the Committee Chair (see A/AC.109/2016/L.16).

B. Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

43. At the third meeting of the Fourth Committee, on 4 October 2016, further to a decision taken at the second meeting, the Committee heard statements from the President of French Polynesia, Édouard Fritch, and 18 petitioners on the question of French Polynesia. The meeting marked the first time the Committee heard the President of the Territory since its re-listing. Mr, Fritch stated that the Polynesian independence movement had never held a majority in French Polynesia and that the French State had recognized the consequences of nuclear testing since 2010. The French State was not confiscating the natural resources of French Polynesia for its own benefit. French Polynesia was recognized as having broad autonomy, as was shown by its acceptance as a full member of the Pacific Islands Forum. He found it incomprehensible that French Polynesia had been re-listed as a Non-Self-Governing Territory in 2013; 70 per cent of the electorate had consistently opted for an autonomous status. He therefore saw no need for arbitration by the United Nations. The petitioners referred to a number of issues, including the consequences of 30 years of nuclear tests, the Territory's sovereignty over its natural resources, linguistic colonization by France, the inability to protect local employment, immigration laws, and the judicial and educational systems in place. In response to questions asked by the representative of Papua New Guinea, the President of French Polynesia said that the Territory had sufficient powers to govern its people, and that its re-listing was therefore unfounded. The representatives of Algeria, Cuba, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Vanuatu and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had asked questions of a number of petitioners and sought more information on issues connected with the development of the political situation of French Polynesia since its re-listing as a Non-Autonomous Territory, the exploitation of natural resources, and the need to update the 2014 report of the Secretary-General on the effects of nuclear tests.

44. At its 7th meeting, on 10 October 2016, the Fourth Committee adopted draft resolution XIX, entitled "Question of French Polynesia", contained in chapter XIII of the report of the Special Committee (A/71/23), as orally revised, without a vote.

C. Action taken by the General Assembly

45. On 6 December 2016, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 71/120, based on the report of the Special Committee transmitted to the Assembly (A/71/23) and its subsequent consideration by the Fourth Committee. In that resolution, the General Assembly:

(a) Reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of French Polynesia to self-determination, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and with

General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) containing the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples;

(b) Also reaffirmed that it is ultimately for the people of French Polynesia to determine freely their future political status in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter, the Declaration and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and in that connection called upon the administering Power, in cooperation with the territorial Government and appropriate bodies of the United Nations system, to develop political education programmes for the Territory in order to foster an awareness among the people of French Polynesia of their right to self-determination in conformity with the legitimate political status options, based on the principles clearly defined in Assembly resolution 1541 (XV) and other relevant resolutions and decisions;

(c) Called upon the administering Power to participate in and cooperate fully with the work of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in order to implement the provisions of Article 73 *e* of the Charter and the Declaration and in order to advise the Special Committee on the implementation of the provisions under Article 73 *b* of the Charter on efforts to promote self-government in French Polynesia, and encouraged the administering Power to facilitate visiting and special missions to the Territory;

(d) Regretted that the administering Power had not responded to the request to submit information on French Polynesia under Article 73 *e* of the Charter;

(e) Reaffirmed that an obligation exists on the part of the administering Power to transmit information under Chapter XI of the Charter, and requested the administering Power to transmit to the Secretary-General such information on French Polynesia as called for under the Charter;

(f) Urged the administering Power concerned to ensure the permanent sovereignty of the people of French Polynesia over their natural resources, including marine resources and undersea minerals, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly;

(g) Requested the Secretary-General to provide continuous updates to his report on the environmental, ecological, health and other impacts of the 30-year period of nuclear testing in French Polynesia, with further details on the impacts of nuclear testing in the Territory, particularly on the consequences of exposure to atomic radiation;

(h) Calls upon the administering Power to intensify its dialogue with French Polynesia in order to facilitate rapid progress towards a fair and effective self-determination process, under which the terms and timelines for an act of self-determination would be agreed;

(i) Requested the Special Committee to continue to examine the question of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of French Polynesia and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.